

HORIZONS

Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims



Federal Emergency Management Agency

May 4, 2001

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CONTACT US!

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Hours: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
9 a.m. -12 p.m. Sat.

EMAIL:

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WEBSITE:

www.fema.gov/cerrogrande

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTERS

**M-F 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.,
Sat. 9 a.m. to noon**

Espanola: Johnson Controls Bldg.
1027 N. Railroad

Los Alamos: IT Bldg.,
235 Central Park Sq.

White Rock: 134 State Road 4

Santa Clara Pueblo: Behind Health
Clinic

San Ildefonso Pueblo: TEWA
Visitors Center

Ombudsman:

Espanola

Veronica Verde
Office: 747-4204
Cell: 505-934-9728

Santa Clara and San Ildefonso

Joseph Hesbrook
Office: 424-5908
Cell: 505-934-9699

Los Alamos and White Rock Businesses

Bill Lehman
Office: 661-3121
Cell: 505-934-9698

Los Alamos and White Rock Individuals, M-Th, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Dorothy Hamory
Office: 661-3121
Cell: 505-934-9719

FEMA's Allbaugh Message to Fire Survivors

Dear Cerro Grande Fire Survivors:

Those of you whose lives were changed forever by the Cerro Grande Fire may be acknowledging the first anniversary of the disaster in a variety of ways. Although I won't be there personally for the anniversary, my thoughts and prayers are with you.

As each of you intimately knows, some of your losses can never be replaced. And yet, you have all worked very hard and made tremendous progress toward recovery.

At this time of reflection, I want to take a moment to reaffirm our commitment and the commitment of the entire Cerro Grande Fire Claims staff to continue to do everything we can to assist each of you in the recovery process.

After having the opportunity to talk

with some of you during my last trip to Los Alamos and the surrounding communities and pueblos, I was pleased to see that the compensation process is faster and easier.

You have my promise that we will continue to improve the process to better meet your needs. I hope you will continue to let us know where improvements are needed, and ideas you may have to help us be more efficient and fair. We appreciate and invite your feedback.

It is my hope that with the help of family, friends, the community and the Cerro Grande Fire Claims staff, this spring will continue to be a time of renewal.

Sincerely,

Joe M. Allbaugh

Joe M. Allbaugh

Cerro Grande Compensation Tops \$100 million



Individuals\$57,468,388
Businesses\$16,762,933
State and Local	
Governments\$6,793,193
Tribal Governments	...\$7,840,982
Not-For-Profit\$89,063
Individual Mitigation\$50,879
Community Mitigation	.\$13,070,000

Total Payments: \$102,075,438
As of 4/30/01



Letter from Cerro Grande Director Don Erbach

On July 13, 2000, Congress passed new, groundbreaking legislation, the Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act (CGFAA). It is the largest appropriation and most extensive legislation for disaster-related claims ever passed by Congress, or implemented by a federal agency.

Unlike the traditional FEMA disaster programs that limit funding mainly to emergency needs and repairs (known as the Stafford Act), the CGFAA directed FEMA to compensate victims of the Cerro Grande Fire for all injuries resulting from the fire.

Senator Domenici said it best, "It's not about Small Business Administration disaster loans, small grants and that's about all you can get...it's not going be for six or eight months of temporary housing...it's about a statute that says that we are going to compensate those damaged by this fire."

On August 28, 2000, the Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims was established and began the challenge of creating a new system of accepting and settling claims, and writing checks. It has been said that the job was like trying to build a boat as we rowed it. In order to respond as quickly as possible, we began to make partial payments while at the same developing policy on how to compensate --no easy feat.

On September 4, 2000, we made the first payment of \$500. By the end of February 2001, we had paid \$50 million. And in the last nine weeks, we

have increased that amount to just over \$100 million. Because we have built a sound boat and are rowing full speed ahead, you can expect payments to continue to be paid expeditiously.

I continue to be inspired by the dedication of our staff. Our team includes veteran FEMA staff who relocated here, away from their families; contract employees who were asked to do their job in a new way, and local employees who have enriched our program greatly. It has not always been smooth sailing, but our team has remained steadfast in our commitment to the recovery of those affected by the fire.

We realize that this brand-new process sometimes has been frustrating for some of you. We appreciate your patience. Many of the lessons we have learned came from you. We've improved our processes by listening to what works or doesn't work and made the needed adjustments.

You have inspired us with your generosity of spirit as you work to support each other and assist us in helping you, and you've inspired us with your courage as you face the daunting challenge of recovery. In turn, you have our promise we will continue to do everything we can to make the compensation process as efficient and fair as possible.

Sincerely,

Don Erbach

Don Erbach

Cerro Grande Staff Dedicate Memorial Trees

The staff of OCGFC, the GAB Robins claims adjusters staff and other private contributors have purchased three trees to be planted in areas burned in the Cerro Grande Fire as memorials to survivors.

A nine-foot Chinquapin oak was planted in Los Alamos and seven-foot Chisos red oaks were planted on the Santa Clara and on the San Ildefonso pueblos.

As part of the first anniversary of the fire, Don Erbach, Director of OCGFC, placed granite markers dedicating the trees to fire survivors.

The County Extension Agent recommended the type of trees, and they were purchased from Trees That Please in Tome, New Mexico.

Saturday Los Alamos Library Information Booth Closes

The Saturday OCGFC booth at the Los Alamos Library is now closed. For information on claims, mitigation or other issues, please visit any of our Service Centers, open weekdays and Saturday mornings. There also will be an information booth at Ashley Pond in Los Alamos from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, May 5, 2001.

\$13 Million Check to LA

FEMA Director Joe M. Allbaugh on April 19 presented a check to Los Alamos County for more than \$13 million to make the community more fire resistant. The funds will be used to create defensible space, reduce fuels in the forest, to bury utilities underground and for other measures. "This is just the first installment so the Los Alamos community can get rolling with their projects," said Allbaugh.

Allbaugh also met with Cerro Grande Fire survivors to receive an update on their recovery efforts. "I can see we've made progress since my last trip. I plan on returning this summer to assure that we are continuing to do everything we can to speed the recovery and protect communities from future damage."

Cerro Grande Fire Recovery Timeline

Cerro Grande fire begins	May 4, 2000
FEMA declares Disaster-1329	May 13, 2000
Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act Enacted by Congress	July 13, 2000
Interim Final Rule is published	Aug. 28, 2000
OCGFC Service Centers open to accept Notices of Loss	Aug. 28, 2000
Final Rule is published	Mar. 21, 2001
\$100 million in claims paid	April 27, 2001
First Anniversary of the fire	May 4, 2001
Last day to file Notice of Loss	Aug. 28, 2002
Last day for all Final Determinations	Feb. 24, 2003
Last day to incur mitigation costs	Aug. 28 2003